

DEVELOPING READING CULTURE AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Saodat Abduraximovna Kodirova¹, Rustamova Gulmira Djumayevna²,

Scientific Supervisor: Associate Professor of Navoi State University, Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Philological Sciences¹, 5th-year student, Group A-10, Primary Education Program, Faculty of Preschool and Primary Education, Navoi State University²

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Abstract

The development of a sustainable reading culture among primary school students is one of the important conditions for improving their intellectual, linguistic, emotional, and social development. Reading at the primary education stage is not limited to the acquisition of technical reading skills; it also contributes to the formation of independent thinking, imagination, vocabulary, communication abilities, and interest in learning. This article examines pedagogical approaches to developing reading habits among primary school students and identifies the factors that influence children's motivation to read. Particular attention is given to age-appropriate literature, teacher guidance, family involvement, interactive reading activities, reading discussions, storytelling, book presentations, and the effective use of modern educational technologies. The study considers reading culture as a complex educational phenomenon that includes motivation to read, conscious selection of books, understanding of texts, ability to express personal opinions, and regular engagement with literary works. The analysis demonstrates that systematic and emotionally engaging reading activities can increase children's interest in books and create positive attitudes toward independent reading. The article also emphasizes the importance of cooperation between school and family in establishing a supportive reading environment. The findings may be useful for primary school teachers, educational researchers, parents, and specialists involved in developing children's reading competence.

Keywords: primary education, reading culture, reading motivation, primary school students, children's literature, reading competence, independent reading, literary education, teacher guidance, family involvement.

1. Introduction

Reading occupies a significant place in the educational development of children because it provides access to knowledge, cultural values, language development, and creative thinking. The primary school period is particularly important for establishing a child's relationship with books. During these years, students gradually move from learning how to read toward using reading as a means of obtaining information, experiencing emotions, understanding other people, and exploring the surrounding world. Therefore, the formation of reading culture should be considered an important component of primary education.

A child's attitude toward reading is influenced by many factors. These include the content and quality of books, the accessibility of literature, the methods used by teachers, parental attitudes, peer influence, and the availability of digital entertainment. If reading is presented only as a compulsory academic task, students may perceive books as an obligation rather than a source of enjoyment and discovery. In contrast, when children are given opportunities to choose appropriate books, discuss stories, express opinions, and connect literary situations with their own experiences, reading can become a meaningful and enjoyable activity.

Reading culture encompasses several interconnected abilities and attitudes. It involves the desire to read, regular interaction with literary and informational texts, conscious selection of reading materials, comprehension of content, interpretation of characters and events, and the ability to discuss what has been read. Consequently, teaching children to read fluently is only one part of the broader process of developing a reading culture.

Primary school teachers have a central role in this process. The teacher's personal attitude toward books, reading practices, and literature can influence students' motivation. A classroom in which books are visible, accessible, and regularly discussed can create a natural reading environment. Short reading sessions, storytelling, book exhibitions, literary games, reading circles, creative assignments, and discussions can make reading more interactive.

Family participation is another important factor. Children who observe parents and other family members reading may develop a stronger understanding of reading as a normal and valuable part of everyday life. Joint reading, conversations about stories, visits to libraries and bookstores, and creating a small home library can strengthen children's connection with books.

The purpose of this article is to examine effective pedagogical approaches to developing reading culture among primary school students and to identify educational conditions that can support sustainable reading motivation and independent reading habits.

2. Materials and Methods

The study was based on an analysis of pedagogical, psychological, and methodological approaches related to children's reading development and literary education. Theoretical materials concerning primary education, reading competence, children's literature, reading motivation, and educational interaction were examined.

The research employed several complementary methods. The theoretical analysis method was used to examine scientific and pedagogical perspectives concerning the development of reading habits in children. Comparative analysis was applied to identify differences between traditional and interactive approaches to reading instruction. Observation-based pedagogical analysis was used to consider children's potential responses to different reading activities. Generalization was applied to formulate practical recommendations for teachers and parents.

Particular attention was paid to the characteristics of primary school students. Children of this age demonstrate developing cognitive abilities, expanding vocabulary, active imagination, and increasing independence. Therefore, reading materials and instructional methods should correspond to their psychological and educational characteristics.

The methodological framework focused on several major components: motivation, accessibility of literary material, comprehension, interaction, independent choice, creativity, and continuity. These components were considered interconnected rather than isolated elements. For example, a student who understands a text well is more likely to participate actively in discussions, while successful participation may increase confidence and motivation to read additional books.

The analysis also considered the role of digital technologies. Digital resources can provide access to electronic books, audiobooks, interactive texts, and supplementary materials. However, technology should complement rather than completely replace traditional reading. The pedagogical objective should remain the development of meaningful interaction with texts rather than simply increasing the amount of screen-based activity.

3. Results

The analysis indicates that the formation of reading culture among primary school students is most effective when reading is organized as a regular, meaningful, and emotionally engaging educational activity. Several important results can be identified.

First, reading motivation plays a fundamental role. Children are more likely to read regularly when they perceive books as interesting and personally meaningful. Therefore, the selection of age-appropriate texts with engaging plots, understandable language, attractive illustrations, and recognizable emotional situations can contribute to stronger motivation.

Second, student choice has considerable pedagogical value. When children are allowed to select from several suitable books, they can develop a sense of independence and responsibility. Choice also enables teachers to consider differences in students' interests and reading abilities.

Third, interactive activities can make reading more effective. Reading followed by discussion allows students to explain characters' behavior, identify important events, predict possible outcomes, and formulate personal opinions. Such activities transform reading from a passive process into an active intellectual experience.

Fourth, creative responses to literary texts can strengthen comprehension. Students may draw illustrations, create alternative endings, prepare short presentations, dramatize scenes, write letters to characters, or retell stories from another character's perspective. These tasks encourage students to process the content of a book through different forms of expression.

Fifth, teacher support remains essential, particularly for students who experience difficulties with reading. Individual recommendations, guided reading, vocabulary explanation, and differentiated tasks can help students overcome barriers and gradually become more independent readers.

Sixth, family involvement can reinforce school-based reading activities. A consistent reading environment at home can provide children with additional opportunities to practice and discuss reading. Parents do not necessarily need to conduct formal lessons; regular shared reading and conversations about books can be sufficient to establish positive habits.

Seventh, the classroom environment itself can influence reading behavior. A small classroom library, thematic book displays, recommendations from classmates, and regular book-related activities can make literature more visible in students' everyday school experience.

Another important result is that reading culture develops gradually. It cannot be formed through a single event, competition, or reading campaign. Sustainable development requires continuity, systematic teacher support, appropriate literary materials, and cooperation between educational institutions and families.

4. Discussion

The development of reading culture should be understood as a long-term educational process rather than simply an increase in the number of books read by students. A child may read many texts without developing deep comprehension or a personal interest in literature. Therefore, qualitative aspects of reading should receive particular attention.

One of the central pedagogical challenges is maintaining a balance between compulsory and voluntary reading. School curricula inevitably require students to work with specific texts, but opportunities for voluntary reading should also be provided. Free-choice reading can help children discover personal literary interests and associate books with positive experiences.

The teacher's role is especially significant in creating such conditions. A teacher who regularly recommends books, shares impressions about stories, asks open-ended questions, and respects different interpretations can establish a classroom culture in which reading becomes a form of communication. Importantly, students should not feel that there is always only one acceptable response to a literary work. Appropriate discussion should allow them to justify their opinions using evidence from the text.

The use of children's literature should also be carefully planned. Literary works can introduce students to different characters, situations, cultures, values, and social experiences. Through stories, children may learn to understand emotions, consider alternative perspectives, and discuss moral choices. Thus, literary reading can contribute not only to language development but also to social and emotional learning.

Another important aspect is the development of reading comprehension. Fluency alone does not guarantee meaningful reading. Students need to learn how to identify the main idea, distinguish important and secondary information, establish relationships between events, infer meanings, and evaluate characters' actions. Questions before, during, and after reading can support these processes. Modern technologies create both opportunities and challenges. Electronic books and audiobooks can increase accessibility and may be useful for students with different learning preferences. Interactive

digital resources can also provide additional vocabulary and comprehension support. At the same time, excessive dependence on short digital content may reduce children's willingness to engage with longer and more complex texts. Consequently, digital tools should be integrated into reading education purposefully and under appropriate pedagogical guidance.

The family-school partnership deserves particular emphasis. If teachers encourage reading while the home environment does not provide opportunities or positive attitudes toward books, the development of stable habits may become more difficult. Conversely, parental encouragement can reinforce classroom initiatives. Schools can support families by providing reading recommendations, organizing family reading projects, and sharing simple strategies for discussing books with children. The cultural and linguistic context should also be considered. Children's literature that reflects familiar experiences, national traditions, local culture, and age-appropriate social situations may help students establish a stronger emotional connection with reading. At the same time, exposure to high-quality literature from different cultures can broaden children's worldview.

Overall, the development of reading culture requires an integrated approach in which reading instruction, literary education, motivation, family participation, and creative activities complement one another. The ultimate objective is not merely to produce technically proficient readers but to support children in becoming curious, thoughtful, and increasingly independent readers.

5. Conclusion

The formation of reading culture among primary school students is an important component of modern primary education. Reading contributes to the development of language, comprehension, imagination, independent thinking, communication, and cultural awareness. However, these benefits are more likely to emerge when children develop a positive and sustainable relationship with books. The analysis demonstrates that effective reading education should combine systematic instruction with opportunities for voluntary reading, personal choice, discussion, creative expression, and independent exploration. Teachers should select literature that corresponds to students' age, interests, linguistic abilities, and developmental needs. Interactive methods can make reading more engaging, while differentiated support can help students with different levels of reading competence. Family involvement is equally significant. Regular reading at home, conversations about books, access to appropriate literature, and positive parental attitudes can strengthen habits developed at school. Cooperation between teachers and parents therefore creates a more consistent educational environment.

Modern digital resources can supplement traditional reading by increasing access to literature and providing additional learning opportunities. Nevertheless, technology should be used purposefully and should not displace meaningful engagement with substantial texts.

In conclusion, reading culture develops through continuity, motivation, appropriate pedagogical support, and cooperation among teachers, students, and families. Establishing positive reading experiences during the primary school years can provide a strong foundation for lifelong learning and independent intellectual development.

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